

# Lebanese PM visits Saudi Arabia's pavilion at COP26 amid Gulf row

Tue, 2021-11-02 20:38

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati visited Saudi Arabia's pavilion at the UN Climate Change Conference, amid attempts to ease the diplomatic and economic fallout triggered by a government minister's remarks on the war in Yemen.

Mikati was received at the pavilion by the Kingdom's ambassador to the UK, Prince Khalid bin Bandar Al-Saud, who explained his country's vision for the environment, a green economy, and climate change.

The prime minister praised the green initiatives launched by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and he also visited the UAE's pavilion at COP26.

Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi has caused anger by saying the Iran-backed Houthis were defending themselves in Yemen and that the war should stop.

Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, have recalled their ambassadors from Lebanon and also instructed Lebanon's ambassadors to leave.

## Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Kordahi has not quit despite a request from Mikati, and his refusal to resign has the backing of Hezbollah and the Marada Movement.

Saudi Arabia said Kordahi's stance reflected Hezbollah's hegemony over Lebanon.

A delegation of economic bodies met Lebanon's Maronite Patriarch Bechara Al-Rahi on Tuesday to express their concern about the damage being done to the country and its people.

The secretary-general of the economic bodies, Nicolas Chammas, said: "We condemn all that is happening today between Lebanon and the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has been the leader of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the past 70 years. The Kingdom and Arab Gulf countries have always supported Lebanon at the political, social, humanitarian, financial, and economic levels, especially during the civil war and post-civil war eras.

"As economists, we were appalled by the setbacks happening today, for the Kingdom is the primary employer of the Lebanese in the Gulf and elsewhere,

and is the primary importer from Lebanon. It is also the primary investor. This means that any setback will have severe repercussions on the country, and we should not forget that we heavily rely on the Kingdom regarding voting inside the IMF to retrieve Lebanon out of this crisis.”

He warned that thousands of families would be directly affected by the crisis as there were factories in Lebanon that were dependent on the Kingdom and the Arabian Gulf for imports of raw materials, which had already stopped.

The head of economic bodies, Mohammed Choukair, said there was no progress on the political track to resolve the crisis.

He expressed regret that Lebanese President Michel Aoun was distancing himself from the issue and was in “full acquiescence.”

The damaged relations with the Gulf come as Lebanon tries to climb out of its economic and financial difficulties.

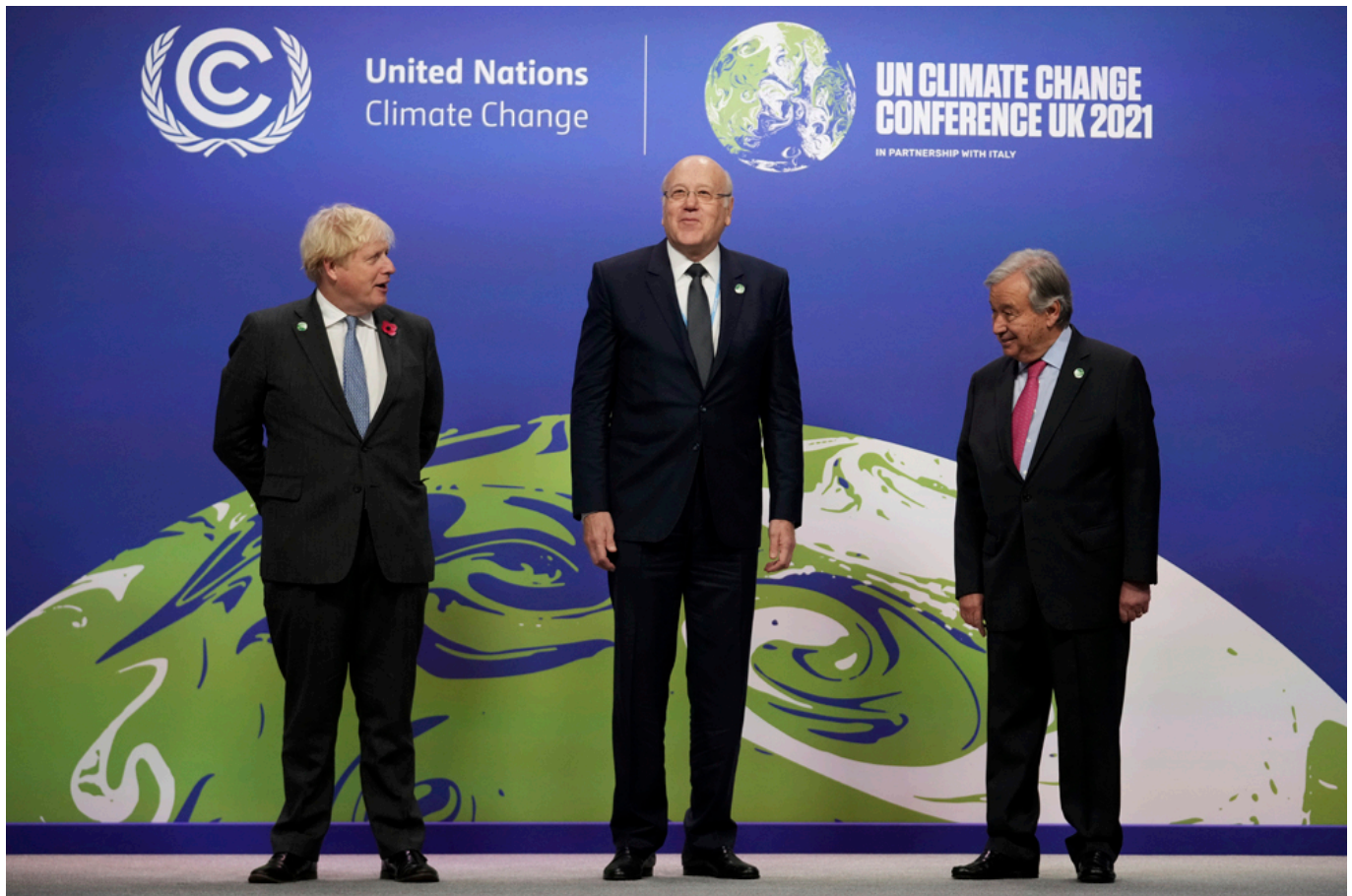
During a meeting with Mikati, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated that Washington would “continue to support the efforts of the Lebanese government to re-establish stability and achieve economic recovery, and the negotiations with the International Monetary Fund until the next parliamentary elections.”

Mikati’s media office said that Blinken stressed “continuous support” to the Lebanese army, the education, healthcare, and environment sectors.

The prime minister met French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, who stressed his country’s support for Lebanon’s political and economic stability.

In a meeting with Mikati, German Chancellor Angela Merkel confirmed her country’s readiness to support Lebanon in all fields, and stressed Germany’s keenness to support Lebanon’s stability and recovery.

Leaked information said that all those who met Mikati expressed their opposition to his government’s resignation so that it could “achieve what is required from it in getting the country out of its economic and financial predicament.”



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Why Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati never stood a chance Mikati fears slippery slope if Lebanese-Saudi crisis is not resolved

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## [Egypt, US sign 7 grant deals worth \\$125m](#)

Tue, 2021-11-02 20:11

CAIRO: Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat announced the signing of seven grant agreements with the US Agency for International Development worth a total of \$125 million.

The agreements come within the framework of the joint economic relations program between the two countries in order to support the implementation of

Egypt's development vision.

Al-Mashat noted that the announced agreements will stimulate the state's development efforts in the fields of education, science and technology, agriculture, health, economic governance, trade and investment. A grant worth \$5 million was also directed to the health sector earlier to improve the country's response to the pandemic.

Al-Mashat revealed that Egypt's International Cooperation Ministry, the National Council for Women and the World Economic Forum had also launched the "Closing the Gender Gap Accelerator" initiative – the first of its kind in Africa and the Middle East – which takes institutional measures to empower women.

She explained that the ministry is seeking to agree on a new partnership with USAID to help achieve the goals of the initiative to "bridge the gender gap, improve the work environment for women in the private sector, and enhance financial inclusion for women."

US Ambassador Jonathan Cohen said: "I am pleased to announce \$125 million in economic aid from the US to Egypt. This assistance is part of the US government's \$30 billion investment in Egypt over the past 40 years, which has brought about clean water and wastewater services to 25 million Egyptians, eliminated polio, built 2,000 schools, and provide 4,000 university scholarships."

Egypt's development cooperation portfolio with USAID has recorded about \$900 million since 2014, while the partnership portfolio between Egypt and the US since 1978 amounts to around \$30 billion.



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[Jonathan Cohen](#)

[United States of America \(USA\)](#)

Egypt, US in Red Sea naval exercises to support regional security  
Egypt, US foreign ministers discuss cooperation amid coronavirus outbreak

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## [‘The world is watching,’ US tells Sudan’s military](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-11-02 19:33

LONDON: The US special envoy for the Horn of Africa on Tuesday urged Sudan’s military to re-establish civilian rule, warning that “the world is watching.”

At a press briefing attended by Arab News, Jeffrey Feltman said: “The events of Oct. 25 in Sudan and the days since are a grave setback. The United States will continue to stand with the people of Sudan in their non-violent struggle

to advance the goals of Sudan's revolution."

On Oct. 25, military leaders dissolved Sudan's transitional government and detained its civilian leaders, who had been steering the country toward democratic rule.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who had been calling for full civilian rule to replace the civil-military power-sharing that had been in place since the 2019 revolution, was confined to house arrest.

"We remain extremely concerned about Sudan's democratic trajectory after the military takeover," Feltman said, adding that the military has "hijacked and betrayed the aspirations of the Sudanese people for a peaceful, democratic country, as evidenced by the 2019 peaceful revolution and enshrined in that year's constitutional declaration."

The 2019 revolution saw the overthrow of dictator Omar Bashir after three decades in power. A large-scale civilian-led movement engaged in peaceful protest and civil disobedience for months until the military enacted a coup against him.

The transitional government was then formed, comprising both civilian and military leaders and aimed at delivering long-term stability and democracy.

Feltman said the international community is largely in agreement in its support for the civilian government.

"The international community, from the African Union, to the Arab League, to the UN Security Council and to international financial institutions, have signaled loudly their deep concern about the military's unconscionable actions," he added. "We join them in calling for the immediate restoration of democratic governance in Sudan."

Since the October coup, protests have seen many Sudanese people killed and injured at the hands of security forces.

"We urge the military to release all civilians detained in connection with the unacceptable events of Oct. 25, and to ensure that any who had been injured receive necessary medical care without interference," Feltman said.

The US has previously suspended huge amounts of funding it had been providing to the new Sudanese government, but Feltman said humanitarian aid is exempt from this.

"I've admired the courage of the Sudanese people in demanding that their voices are heard, and in helping their country make strides toward a new democratic Sudan," he added.

"To those freedom-loving Sudanese, and to those that would seek to rob them of their democratic ambition, I say: The world is watching."



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Demand for special UN rights council meet after Sudan coup  
Sudanese ex-ruling party head Ghandour re-arrested

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## [Mikati fears slippery slope if Lebanese-Saudi crisis is not resolved](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-01 23:11

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Monday Beirut faces a slippery slope in its growing diplomatic row with the Gulf following controversial comments made by Information Minister George Kordahi on the Arab coalition's intervention in Yemen.

Mikati, who is in Scotland to participate in the COP26 climate summit, sent a message on Monday via WhatsApp to government ministers, in which he wrote that he had “asked Kordahi to prioritize his patriotism over everything else, but this has not happened.”

Mikati added: “We are consequently facing a slippery slope.”

The prime minister also said: “If we do not resolve this crisis quickly, we will fall into a disaster that none of us wants. God bears witness that I have warned against this.”

Kordahi has failed so far to apologize for his remarks, and appeared to rule out offering his resignation in a statement on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia believes Kordahi’s statements to be offensive and represent “a new episode of reprehensible and rejected positions issued by Lebanese officials towards the Kingdom and its policies, in addition to Beirut’s failure to take the measures to stop the export of narcotics from Lebanon.”

Beirut has not yet taken any measure to restore ties between the two states, nor Lebanon’s relations with other Gulf nations that have shown solidarity with Saudi Arabia, especially Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE.

Mikati’s warning came as DHL in Lebanon returned mail and goods to customers who wanted them shipped to Saudi Arabia.

“The DHL administration was informed by the company’s branch in Saudi Arabia on Saturday that no packages can be shipped to the Kingdom, but there are no instructions so far regarding the fate of shipments from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon,” a source told Arab News on Monday, adding “we have returned all packages to our customers and we are yet to receive new instructions.”

This measure falls within the Saudi decision to cut diplomatic and economic ties with Lebanon, which was taken on Oct. 29, against the backdrop of the comments made by Kordahi a month before he was appointed.

Hezbollah’s Mohammed Fneish continued to defend Kordahi and criticized those who stood by the importance of Lebanese-Saudi ties, describing their positions as “demonstrating weakness.”

Fneish said: “If we stand our ground, we will be able to overcome these issues, just as we did many problems and challenges that we faced in the past.”

The website of the National News Agency, the official news agency of the Lebanese state, supervised by Kordahi, was hacked on Saturday afternoon.

Pictures were published on the website containing threats against Kordahi, and the website has since been suspended.

While political observers in Lebanon unanimously agree that Kordahi’s resignation would be the most positive outcome, they believe Mikati’s hands are tied since Shiite government ministers threatened to boycott Cabinet if



Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the investigation into the Beirut port blast, is not removed.

The same ministers to have dissented over Bitar are also among those to have also voiced their objection to Kordahi's removal.

Mikati's media office reported that he held meetings with several officials on the sidelines of the COP26 summit to discuss Lebanon's crises, especially the dispute with Saudi Arabia.

Mikati met with French President Emmanuel Macron and the President of the European Council Charles Michel.

He then met with the Managing Director of the IMF Kristalina Georgieva, the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, and outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Mikati also spoke with Lebanese President Michel Aoun over the phone and discussed "possible measures to address the recent developments."



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Pressure mounts for removal of Lebanese information minister over Gulf row  
Saudi Arabia's King Salman thanks leaders of Kuwait, Bahrain for Lebanon stance

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## What to expect following Biden's meeting with Erdogan

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-01 23:02

ANKARA: The much-awaited meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Rome on Sunday focused on several topics of longstanding disagreement between the two NATO allies.

During the meeting, Biden noted Turkey's importance as an ally and its defense partnership with the US, but also raised his concerns about the Russian-made S-400 missile system on Turkish soil that poses a threat to NATO systems, especially amid talk of further purchases of Russian missiles.

Biden also emphasized the importance of strong democratic institutions and respect for human rights, although no details were given of specific human rights issues raised during the meeting, which came days after 10 foreign ambassadors in Turkey, including the US envoy, called for the release of jailed philanthropist Osman Kavala and for the respecting of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in a joint statement.

The Turkish presidential office said in a statement that the meeting was held in a positive atmosphere, and both leaders expressed their willingness to "further strengthen and improve Turkey-US relations and agreed to set up a common mechanism accordingly."

Caroline Rose, senior analyst at the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, told Arab News: "There is limited space for cooperation between Turkey and the US, but it's unlikely in the near-term that relations will be able to experience a substantial reset or significant rapprochement."

She added that with Turkey seeking to purchase a second S-400 missile system, rising tensions with Kurdish forces and allied US troops in northeast Syria, and the ripples from the recent diplomatic crisis over Kavala, the Biden administration is hesitant about relying too heavily on its relationship with Ankara.

"Turkey will continue to prove a useful partner against Iran in the Middle East as the US conducts further personnel reduction, as it pivots to Asia. It's also possible for limited US-Turkey cooperation if tensions continue to de-escalate in the Eastern Mediterranean, opening a potential door to increased ties," she said.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, underlined two reasons that might have pushed the US towards de-escalation with Turkey.

"Every time there is a crisis between Ankara and Washington, the consensus is (on) not ignoring Ankara and keeping it anchored inside NATO. (The) White House follows the same policy once again," he said.

The Turkish parliament recently ratified a motion to extend troop deployment in Iraq and Syria for another two years, while Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held a phone call last week to discuss regional defense and security issues.

For Cagaptay, another reason for this bilateral meeting is related to Turkey's imminent operations in northern Syria to undermine territories held by the US-backed Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units.

"I think the US administration pushes for the meeting to take place (to) talk about the specifics of such a potential incursion and its mechanisms if this were to happen," he said.

"But at some zones, the operation would require US troops not to stand in the way of Turkish troops. Both parties would want to see US troops out of harm's way," added Cagaptay.

In the meantime, Turkey recently expressed interest in buying 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16s and another 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes, but the sale would require the approval of Congress.

By purchasing F-16s, Ankara also wants to recover a \$1.4 billion payment made just before it was kicked out of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program because of its purchase of the S-400s.

Asked whether he was planning to provide Turkey with F-16s, Biden said they were "planning to have a good conversation." However, Cagaptay thinks such a deal will face resistance in Congress over the S-400 deal.

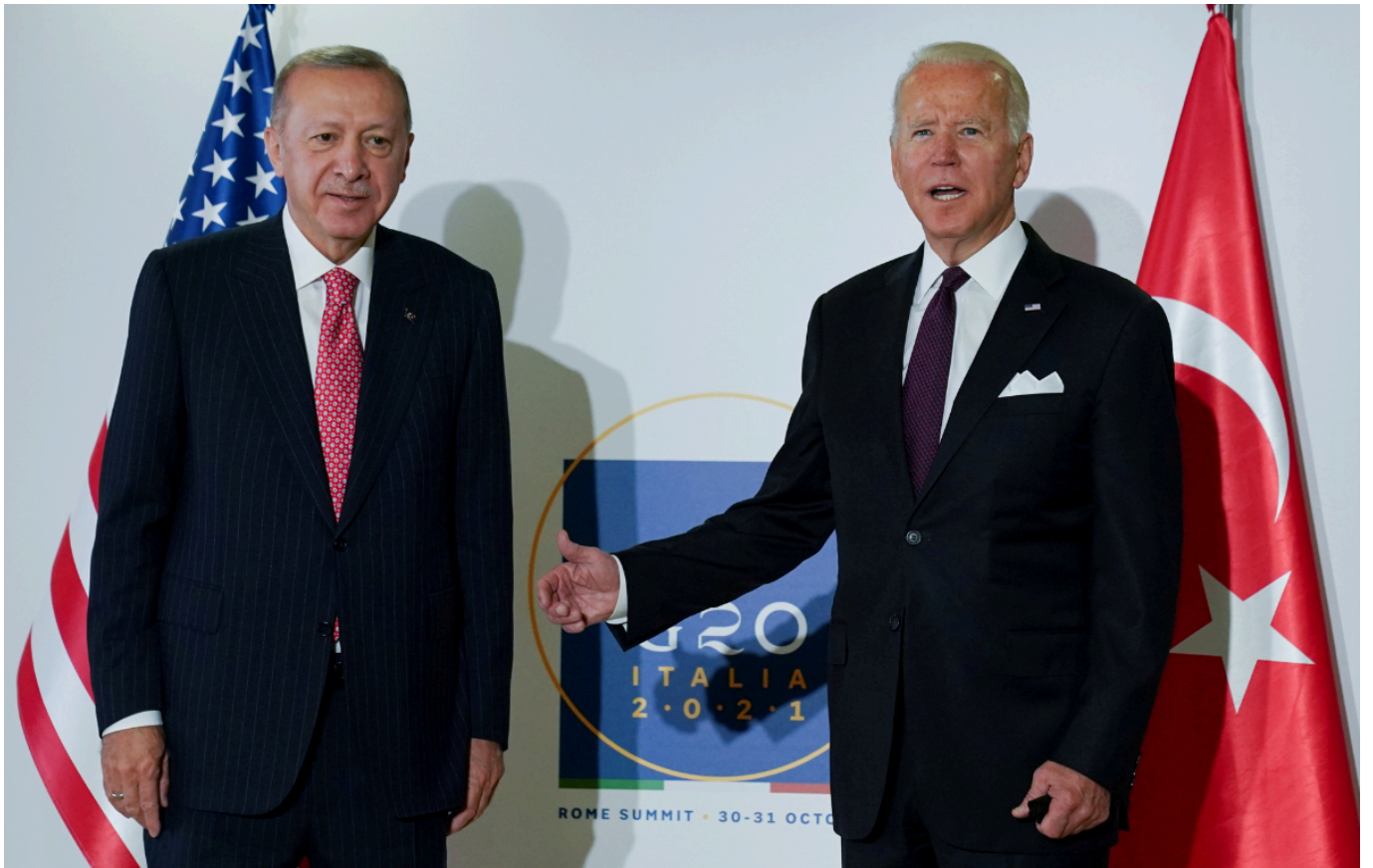
Turkish and US defense delegations had a meeting on the F-35s this week in Ankara, with experts thinking the issue could undermine Turkish-US ties.

"There is a strict separation of powers in the US political system, and Congress has a majority of opposition voices about this crucial sale," Cagaptay said.

The political process in Syria, humanitarian assistance for civilians in Afghanistan, elections in Libya, the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and diplomatic efforts in the South Caucasus also formed part of the bilateral agenda during the Biden-Erdogan meeting.

According to Cagaptay, the Biden administration wants to keep dialogue channels open with Erdogan, especially to encourage Ankara to play an active role in maintaining flights in and out of the Afghan capital Kabul, and to contribute to airport security.

Biden and Erdogan last met in June to discuss whether Turkey could secure and operate the Kabul International Airport, but the plans failed after the rapid takeover of the country by Taliban forces.



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Turkey's Erdogan says he has signed \$3.2bn green climate fund deal Biden to use COP26 to ramp up pressure on Congress climate change funding vote